

The Tampa Tribune

State Officials, Scientists In Tampa To Draft Global Warming Strategy

By MIKE SALINERO

Published: May 8, 2007

TAMPA - Top Florida scientists will join state policy-makers in Tampa this week for separate meetings aimed at mapping a state strategy for global warming.

Tonight, the Climate Change Advisory Group to the Florida Energy Commission will hold its second public hearing at Tampa International Airport. During the meeting, the advisory group will listen to residents, businesses and interest groups who have ideas about how the state should deal with climate change.

On Wednesday, a three-day conference on climate change begins at the Tampa Renaissance Hotel. Panels consisting of scientists and government officials will look at the unique challenges Florida faces as the climate and water temperatures warm.

The fact that two climate change meetings are happening in the same week in the same Florida city is one more sign that state leaders are taking the danger of global warming seriously, said Susan Glickman, Florida policy director for the National Resources Defense Council.

"It's such a total sea change from a year ago as far as the understanding of our citizens and our public officials," Glickman said.

Glickman, a member of the advisory group to the energy commission, will speak tonight on climate change initiatives in Arizona and California. On Wednesday, she will be on a panel reviewing the history of climate change policies across the country.

The Florida Legislature created the Florida Energy Commission last year to recommend ways to lessen the state's dependence on foreign oil, increase uses of sustainable energy and reduce Florida's greenhouse gas emissions. The advisory group was charged with collecting information from experts and the public to help the commission make its recommendations.

"The public comes to a meeting and says jaw-dropping things that can change your work, and it's terribly important that we listen," said Todd L. Sack, chairman of the advisory group.

The meeting starts at 5:30 p.m. in the Hillsborough County Aviation Authority boardroom and lasts until 10 p.m. Public comments from citizens, businesses and interest groups will occur in the middle third of the meeting. Each commenter will get five minutes.

The Wednesday conference will be divided into parallel sessions, said Thomas L. Crisman, the Patel professor of environment at the University of South Florida. One series of lectures will concentrate on what is known and unknown about global warming.

Concurrent sessions will look at government and economic policy related to the science.

"On Friday, we're going to be trying to put those together with recommendations," Crisman said.

The conference is sponsored by the Patel Center for Global Solutions at USF and the Center for Environmental Studies at Florida Atlantic University. Registration costs \$185 and includes lunch and refreshments. For information, call the Patel Center at (813) 974-2954.

Reporter Mike Salinero can be reached at (813) 259-8303 or msalinero@tampatrib.com